

Thoughts on a North Texas Freeway on a Labor Day trip:

Western songwriters were mighty deft at romanticizing a young waddie being trampled by a stampeding herd. Glorifying what could happen to a car driver who looked off for 10 seconds on one of these asphalt channels would call the songsters' hands. Tons of Detroit's marvelous products are hurtling by on both sides of my car. The width of a plating of chrome is the standard passing margin.

Time has been kind enough to dull my sense of hearing, yet 95 percent of the clatter on the radio drills through my worn eardrums. Rock music proctored by word-spilling radio announcers make a man wish for long hair. Shoulder length tresses kept George Washington from taking the full impact of Martha's complaints. Having the same length locks today would surely muffle the beat and blast of the modern records. Tests ought to be run to see how much the kids are hearing.

At the last negotiable exit, the Jaycees were sponsoring a traveler's rest stop. While I was drinking a free Pepsi Cola, a Christmas Carol came on their tape recorder. The lady in charge of the booth said that she was real embarrassed over the mistake. She shouldn't apologize for Christmas songs in September. Chicago mail order houses started hawking Christmas cards last January. Autumn is actually late in the season to start the Noel campaign.

Christopher Columbus was lucky that Spain didn't have freeways back in the day when he was trying to sell the idea of an ocean voyage. Queen Isabel wouldn't have put a counterfeit real piece in the travel budget if all the scenery she'd ever seen was viewed from a multi-lane highway. The world is flat as far as traveling on a freeway is concerned. Hospital waiting rooms offer more flavor than a turnpike does.

Highway sign writers are an impolite group. All morning long I've been rudely ordered to form single lines to the left, to fasten my seat belt, and not to get out of lines with my seat belt unfastened. The Highway Department must have forgotten that the very people they are pushing around are the hosts of the entire highway system. If they had to use cattle or sheep for collateral they'd learn to be a lot more respectful to their bankers.

Most of all, I miss seeing the courthouses that were on the old highways. Courthouses always have been a comfort to the ones of us whom the Lord didn't bless with outer beauty. I don't care how ugly a human is, he doesn't have to be self conscience around a courthouse. Many new mothers could enhance their babies' looks by having photographers use courthouses in the background. For that matter, some of the daddies would look better sitting on a courthouse step, instead of leaning on some shiny prop like a new car.

Each hour the Old Oregon Pizza Parlors has been announcing via radio, the holiday death toll. Now that chained and unchained restaurants can exchange recipes, the highways don't sound so dangerous. Being smashed by a 20 wheel diesel truck doesn't seem so bad when you suspect that the state's restaurant association has a vast grease bank to assure the toxicity of every order of chili or chicken fried steak. The time was never riper for a nationwide serum to prevent ptomaine.

Freeways are an excellent argument for the hearth-and-house-shoe way of life. The weatherman just said that all of Texas had a 10 percent chance of scattered showers. I am deeply grateful, that he didn't say what the odds were of a frightened Shortgrasser making it back home.